

Site No. 13

VAN ZANDT PIER

Newport
Van Zandt Avenue / Washington Street



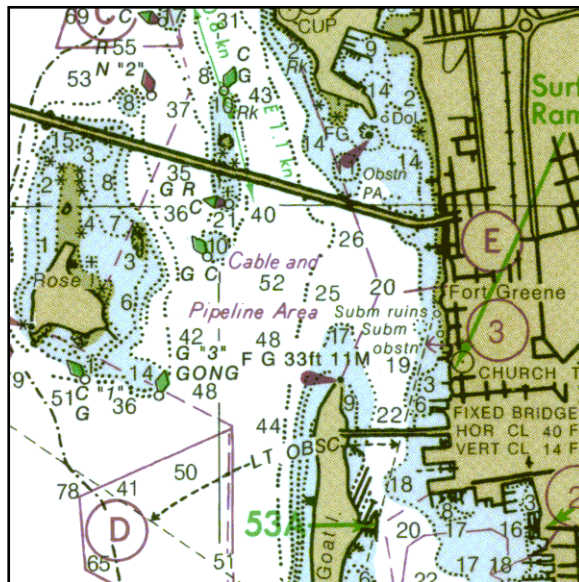
VAN ZANDT PIER

Site Description

Van Zandt Pier is a small neighborhood pier in Newport located at the end of Van Zandt Avenue just south of the east landing of the Claiborne Pell (Newport) Bridge, which carries State Route 138 over the East Passage. This city-owned structure is designated as a CRMC public right-of-way and is used primarily for recreational fishing and swimming by local residents. While offering excellent views of the Pell Bridge and the East Passage, public use of the facility is currently limited by the lack of available public parking around the site.

Location Assessment

Bay Location. Located along the Newport coast within the East Passage, Van Zandt Pier is situated along a stretch of shoreline between the Newport Bridge and the Goat Island Causeway that serves as harbor and mooring area (see Photos 3, 5). While both recreational boating and sailing are popular East Passage activities, very little of either was observed to occur in the vicinity of the pier, as the main navigation channel of the East Passage is located west of Rose Island (see nautical chart image). Newport Harbor proper is located immediate south of the Goat Island Causeway (which itself is also a popular fishing site), and shoreline uses north of the Newport Bridge are associated with Naval Station Newport and the Naval War College. In addition to recreational fishing, the pier itself is also actively used by local children for swimming and diving (Photos 7A and 7B), which is supported by the stairs built into the northerly side of the structure.



As reported in the Online Recreational Fishing Survey, common recreational catch within the lower East Passage is quite diverse: Striped Bass, Bluefish, Summer Flounder, Scup, Tautog, and Squid were all reported in significant numbers spring through fall. Waters in the vicinity of this site were not assessed for aquatic life support use in the *State of the State's Waters Report*, however these waters are permanently closed to shellfishing and have been designated a water quality goal of SB by the RIDEM (see Appendix B).

Land Location. Van Zandt Pier is located within a small dense-residential neighborhood just north of downtown Newport, roughly defined by the Newport Bridge, the Goat Island Causeway, and the railroad that runs through this area (Old Colony & Newport Scenic Railroad - see locus map). A nursing home lies approximately 1/8 mile south of the pier along Washington Street, across from which a small public park provides a pleasant passive recreation environment with benches and shade trees (though no shoreline access is offered by this park). While its proximity to the Newport Bridge and downtown Newport (less than 3/4 mile) would appear to offer excellent accessibility to a wide user base, use of the site by the general public is hindered by the lack of available public parking in the vicinity. The shoreline road (Washington Street) and other residential streets in the area are posted as parking by resident permit only.

Environmental Constraints and Permitting. Van Zandt Pier is located along coastal waters classified by the CRMC as Type 2 (Low-Intensity Use), the coastal feature of which is the seawall along Washington Street at this location (Photo 3). Upon site visit, eel grass was observed both within the water and washed up on the shoreline. The density of eel grass in the vicinity would likely be problematic or prohibitive in permitting if any new or extended structure is considered.

Facilities Assessment

Van Zandt Pier is a hybrid concrete / timber / stone masonry structure which extends approximately 225 feet from the coastal seawall along Washington Street (Photos 1, 4, 8). The “cross” configuration at the end of the pier enhances its capacity for fishing use (see aerial photo), though the structure itself is not handicap-accessible due to the stairs that must be descended to gain access (Photos 4, 5, 8). Anglers interviewed at the time of visit were generally satisfied with the fishing access offered by the structure and the quality of fishing at this location. Several benches are provided along the sides of the pier, and the site and surroundings are kept clean and well-maintained by the Friends of Van Zandt Pier (as indicated on the trash receptacle at the pier entrance).

While this evaluation does not constitute a structural inspection, the entirety of Van Zandt Pier appears to be in fair to poor condition, with the most significant deficiencies being section loss in the concrete piers which support timber-deck sections of the pier (see Photo 6A). The deck and superstructure elements also appear well worn from use and exposure to the elements, and portions of railings and benches are also missing in certain locations (Photo 6B).

As previously noted, the pier is also actively used by local children for diving and swimming (Photos 7A and 7B). In addition to being generally incompatible with fishing use of the pier due to the potential for injury, diving at the site is also inherently hazardous in itself, as there is no lifeguard at the site nor are there any other safety measures in place. One angler at the site noted that these uses seldom conflict, as swimming/diving at this site by children occurs primarily during the day, while fishing use of the site typically picks up in the evenings and continues into nighttime hours.

The lack of parking in the vicinity of the pier remains the greatest limitation to fishing use by the general public. Out-of-city visitors typically park along Washington Street (albeit illegally) or walk to the site from publicly accessible parking spots in and around downtown Newport. The latter may be difficult at times (particularly during the summer) when demand for parking in the vicinity of Newport is high.

Existing Site Conditions

	Poor	Fair	Good	Excellent
Existing Fishing Facilities		X		
Parking	X			
Compatibility with Surrounding Land / Water Uses		X		
Statewide Transportation Accessibility / Public Transit			X	
Site Aesthetics			X	
	Low	Medium	High	
Water Quality (see Appendix B)		X		

Priority for Capital Improvements: **Low**

Given the well-established residential uses which surround the Van Zandt Pier, the lack of public parking (or available land for the potential development thereof), and the presence of eel grass in the vicinity, the development of a longer or larger-capacity fishing structure at this location does not appear feasible. While in effect viable only for a local user base, the Van Zandt Pier site does provide good shoreline fishing access, both in its facilities and the quality of fishing at this location. However, given the current structural condition of the pier, the long-term sustainability of this CRMC public right-of-way is contingent upon the satisfactory rehabilitation or replacement of the existing structure. As such an endeavor could potentially be costly and complicated by the environmental constraints posed by the site, the State may wish to consider providing capital assistance to (or jointly administering a project with) the City of Newport for the rehabilitation of the Van Zandt Pier.



Photo 1. Van Zandt Pier looking northwest from Washington Street.



Photo 2. Looking north along Washington Street. The portion beyond the Van Zandt Avenue intersection is designated as one-way.



Photo 3. Looking south along Washington Street. Parking in this area is by resident permit only.



Photo 4. Looking out to Van Zandt Pier from the entrance.



Photo 5. Entrance to Van Zandt Pier. The site is kept clean by the Friends of Van Zandt Pier as noted on the trash receptacle.



Photos 6A and 6B. Deteriorated condition of pier structure. Significant section loss (left) is typical for all concrete piers supporting timber deck sections of the pier.



Photos 7A and 7B. Swimming use of Van Zandt Pier, including stairway on the northerly side of the pier.



Photo 8. Looking east back along Van Zandt Pier.